

Getting Connected At Home

Overview

Homework

Homework is a regular part of school, and you can help your child do it well. Teachers give homework for many good reasons—to practice and review class lessons, to get students ready for the next lessons, to teach them how to work on their own, and to teach them to use dictionaries, encyclopedias, libraries and the Internet.¹⁸

1. Set up a regular time and a quiet place for your child to work. Try to place it away from TVs, radios, or other loud noise.
2. Have your child get all of the materials needed for the work—pens, pencils, erasers, calculator, paper, books, and highlighters—all in one spot instead of searching for things.
3. Make a homework calendar. During the school day, have your child fill in all homework by the date that it is due. Many teachers have their classes do this anyway, and you can help your child plan assigned homework time.
4. If your child is having trouble with homework, talk to each teacher about the homework—it may be too hard, or there may be other problems in the classroom. The school may be able to offer tutoring or extra help.
5. Ask your child for any teacher comments on homework assignments.
6. If your child misses school, have a friend or classmate get homework assignments.
7. Remember, neatness does count. Don't let your child eat or drink while doing homework.
8. Suggest that your child do homework, then take a short break (snack, play outside, or watch some TV), then go back and recheck the work. It's easier to catch simple mistakes with fresh eyes.
9. Parents with low literacy: talk to teachers or school staff when you have questions. Also talk to them about getting English classes for yourself.



Technology

Television

American children watch an average of three to five hours of TV each day. Although TV can be fun and educational, it's important to know what your children are watching, to make sure it's not too much, and to make sure it doesn't stop them from doing schoolwork. Here are some ideas you may want to consider:¹⁹

- Find out how many hours a day your child watches TV.
- Monitor what your child is watching, and whenever possible, watch the programs with your child.
- Pick a TV show to watch as a family. What kind of conversations can you start from the TV show? For instance, you may ask, "Why are those people in the program so unkind to each other?"
- Plan other activities, such as crafts, reading, doing homework, and writing letters, instead of watching TV. Try to plan at least one different activity each week.
- Avoid using TV as a babysitter.
- Look for TV programs that will stimulate your child's interests and encourage reading (dramatizations of children's stories, wildlife adventures, history, and science).
- Avoid using television as a reward or punishment. It gives TV too much importance.
- If your child has a TV set in the bedroom, you may not know what is being watched. If possible, keep the TV in a common area, like the living room or den.
- Turn off the TV during meals and study time. Make a rule that homework and chores must be finished before the TV can be turned on.
- Help your child understand the difference between make-believe and the real world in television programs.
- Do you need to review your own television watching habits? Remember: your child is watching what you watch and how much time you spend doing it.

Computers

Computers let students travel around the world without ever leaving their desks at school or home. They can make learning easier and more fun, and learning how to use them will give your child many advantages in the future.²⁰

- Find out how computers are used at your child's school.
- How much time each day and week does your child get to use them?
- At school, can your child use the Internet—a worldwide computer network that can provide huge amounts of information on almost any topic? Are there safeguards or filters to prevent inappropriate use?

- Be sure your child's school gives equal computer time to girls and boys. While many women use computers, they are still outnumbered by men in computer jobs. Encourage your daughter to use the computer.III
- If you don't have a computer at home, find out if the local library or community center has computers your child can use to do homework and other school projects.III
- If your child has a learning disability, ask if the school offers special computer programs and/or support for children who have learning disabilities or different learning styles.
- Find out if your child's teachers have been trained to use computers and to use them in helping students learn.
- Ask about the kind of work that your child is doing on the computer. Does it sound challenging? Is your child excited about learning on the computer?
- Take a computer class or learn how to use the computer to assist your child at home. Does the school, local library, or computer center offer computer training for adults?



Additional Information & Resources

1. *Computers and Technology*
http://www.kids.gov/6_8/6_8_computers_history.shtml
2. *MeLKids Homework Helpers:* <http://kids.mel.org/HomeworkHelpers>
MeLTeens Homework Help: <http://teens.mel.org/MelHomeworkHelp>